



Abhinavagupta on Reflection (*Pratibimba*) in the *Tantrāloka*

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Abstract In the celebrated tantric manual, the *Tantrāloka*, Abhinavagupta (fl.c. 975–1025 CE) and his commentator Jayaratha (fl.c. 1225–1275 CE) establish a non-dual Śaiva theory of reflection (*pratibimbavāda*) (3.1-65) using the key metaphors of light (*prakāśa*) and reflective awareness (*vimarśa*). This paper attempts to explain the philosophical problem of reflection from the standpoint of these non-dual Śaivas. It also evaluates the problem in its hermeneutical context, analysing multiple layers of meaning and interpretation. Is the metaphor of reflection only a way of explaining the particular currents of the Śaiva phenomenology represented by the concepts of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*? What philosophical problem does Abhinavagupta seek to solve by complicating the category of reflection and giving it a quasi-paradoxical status? Why does he use the model of the subtle elements (*tanmātras*) to explain the theory of reflection? What does the ‘untaintedness’ (*nairmalya*) of the mirror of consciousness mean for his system? These questions form the focus of this paper.

Keywords Reflection · *pratibimba* · Abhinavagupta · *Tantrāloka* · *pratibimbavāda* · Trika · Śaivism · *Prakāśa* · *Vimarśa* · Jayaratha

Abbreviations

ĪPK	<i>Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā</i> → TORELLA 2002
ĪPV	<i>Īśvarapratyabhijñānavimarśinī</i>
ĪPVB	<i>Bhāskarī</i>
ĪPVV	<i>Īśvarapratyabhijñānavivṛttivimarśinī</i>
KSTS	Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies

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MVUT	<i>Mālinīvijayottaratantra</i>
NT	<i>Netratantra</i>
NTU	<i>Netratantroddyota</i>
PHṛ	<i>Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya</i>
PS	<i>Paramārthasāra</i>
PSV	<i>Paramārthasāravivṛti</i>
PTV	<i>Parātriśikāvivaraṇa</i>
SBUM	<i>Svabodhodayamañjarī</i> → TORELLA 2000
SN	<i>Spanda-nirṇaya</i>
ŚS	<i>Śivasūtra</i>
ŚSV	<i>Śivasūtra-vārttika</i>
SvT	<i>Svacchandatantra</i>
SvTU	<i>Svacchandatanthrodyota</i>
TĀ	<i>Tantrāloka</i>
TAK III	<i>Tantrābhidhānakośa</i> III → RASTELLI and GOODALL 2013
TĀV	<i>Tantrālokaviveka</i>
TS	<i>Tantrasāra</i>
TU	<i>Tantroccaya</i>
VBV	<i>Vijñānabhairava-vivṛti</i>
VM	<i>Vāmakeśvarīmata-vivaraṇa</i>
YS	<i>Yogasūtra</i>

Abhinavagupta (fl. c. 975–1025 CE), the preeminent non-dual Trika Śaiva philosopher of Kashmir, engages with the ‘theory of reflection’ (*pratibimbavāda*) in several of his works, viz. the *Tantrāloka* (TĀ) (3.1–65), *Tantrasāra* (TS-3), *Tantroccaya* (TU-3), *Parātriśikāvivaraṇa* (PTV), *Paramārthasāra* (PS) (verses 6–13), *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī* (ĪPV) 1.2.8 and 2.4.19, and *Īśvarapratyabhijñā-vṛtti-vimarśinī* (ĪPVV) 1.2.8 and 2.4.19. In the TĀ, apart from explicating the theory of reflection (*pratibimbavāda*) in the first 65 verses of chapter three, Abhinavagupta discusses this again in verses 268–294ab¹ of the same chapter, where he engages with the topic of absorption in Śivahood (*śāmbhavasamāveśa*) as the state of emancipation while living (*jīvanmukti*). While the TS and the TU, which are short summaries of the TĀ, touch upon the theory of reflection only briefly, the PTV explores the *pratibimbavāda* in detail from the linguistic-cosmological point of view.² In both the TĀ and the PTV, the idea of ontological categories (*tattvas*) is complexly placed in relation to the emanation of the phonemes in Śaiva cosmology.³ In addition, as noted by David Lawrence,⁴ there are a few other

¹ TĀ 3.267 cd: *alam anyena bahunā prakṛte’tha niyujyate* || See also Jayaratha’s comment in the TĀV thereupon: *athety ānantarye tad ito’ anantaram prakṛtaṁ viśvacitpratibimbavādy eva prastūyate ity arthaḥ* ||.

² See Bäumler (2011) for details on this topic. One may also see the relevant parts of Padoux (1992) and Singh (1988).

³ Apart from the contribution of Padoux (1992) on Abhinavagupta’s philosophy of language, one may also see Biernacki (2013), Lawrence (1998, 2008), and Torella (1999, 2001, 2004).

⁴ Lawrence (2005, p. 592, fn. 39).

examples of Abhinavagupta's basic metaphysical use of the analogy of reflection. For instance the reflection metaphor appears also in ĪPV 1.6.3, ĪPV 2.1.1 (benediction), ĪPV 2.1.8, ĪPV 2.4.10, ĪPV 3.1.1-2, the *Bodhapañcadaśikā* (verses 4–5) and the *Paramārthacarcāvivaraṇa* (verses 4–5).⁵ Abhinavagupta is certainly not the first to develop a theory of reflection or even to use the mirror metaphor to illustrate his system. In fact, as already pointed out by Raniero Gnoli⁶ and argued by Isabelle Ratié,⁷ Utpaladeva (fl.c. 925–975 CE), Abhinavagupta's grandmaster, is undoubtedly a significant source for exploring the complex nature of reflection and its polemics in non-dual Śaiva philosophy. This is gradually becoming clearer thanks to the discovery of the fragments of the ĪPVivṛti by both Raffaele Torella⁸ and Ratié.⁹

The theory of reflection is a standard model in classical Indian philosophical discourse for inquiry into the nature of reality. The philosophical problem involved is whether empirical phenomena are real or not, and in what sense. In other words, is a reflecting object (a prototype) real or is the reflected form (a reflection) real? Can both be real at the same time, or does one of them has to be not-real? This paper attempts to understand these questions in light of the non-dual Śaiva philosophy of Abhinavagupta. My effort will be to develop a clear picture of the idea of reflection in Anuttara Trika Śaivism, mainly as represented by his encyclopaedic Tantric manual, the *Tantrāloka* ('Light on the Tantras'). At the same time, it is impossible to ignore the detailed commentary on the *Tantrāloka* by Jayaratha (fl.c. 1225–1275 CE), entitled *Tantrālokaiviveka* (TĀV). Wherever necessary I have included Jayaratha's explanations as well.¹⁰ By making a close reading of the *Tantrāloka* 3.1-65 and *Viveka* thereupon, this paper attempts to explain the philosophical problem of reflection from the standpoint of these non-dual Śaivas. It also evaluates the problem in its hermeneutical context, analysing multiple layers of meaning and interpretation. Is the metaphor of reflection only a way of explaining the particular currents of Śaiva phenomenology represented by the concepts of light (*prakāśa*) and reflective awareness (*vimarśa*)? What is the philosophical problem Abhinavagupta seeks to solve by complicating the category of reflection and giving it a quasi-paradoxical status? Why does he use the model of the subtle elements (*tanmātras*) to explain the theory of reflection? What does the 'untaintedness (*nairmalya*) of the mirror of consciousness' mean for his system? I intend to engage with these questions while I attempt to investigate non-dual Śaiva theory of reflection.

At the outset it should be mentioned that Abhinavagupta uses the idea of reflection sometimes as a trope and at other times as a theoretical or methodological

⁵ According to Alexis Sanderson (2007, p. 381), the *Paramārthacarcā*'s attribution to Abhinavagupta is doubtful.

⁶ Gnoli (1999, p. 51, fn 3–4).

⁷ See Ratié (2017). Also see Nemec (2011, p. 121, fn. 156).

⁸ Torella (2014).

⁹ Ratié (2016).

¹⁰ All translations of the TĀ and TĀV in this paper are my own, unless indicated otherwise. Readers may also consult the translations by Gnoli (1999) in Italian, Silburn and Padoux (2000) in French, and both Mīśra et al. (2000) and Chaturvedi (2002) in Hindi.

framework.¹¹ He also refers to the idea of reflection simply in terms of a maxim. Maxims are sometimes used as *pramāṇa* or *hetu* to support an argument,¹² while at other times we see authors offering proof for maxims with the support of logical arguments. Thus, the use of a maxim can either be a starting point for analysis, or a concluding sentence that justifies the use of a maxim. This is what we see Jayaratha doing in his—*viveka*, for instance summing up Abhinavagupta's thesis on the *pratibimbavāda* in the following words:

The universe is placed in consciousness according to *the maxim of reflected image in the mirror*, but it is not a real entity which exists as separate from this consciousness assuming the form of an external object. One should not be attached to it [external object].¹³

Navjivan Rastogi (1984) categorises the use of maxims (*nyāyas*) by Abhinavagupta into two groups: (1) basic *nyāyas* and (2) ordinary *nyāyas*. The basic *nyāyas*, he says, “have been resorted to convey or clarify the logical or metaphysical standpoint of the system on a particular issue,” while ordinary *nyāyas* “have purely illustrative function and are resorted to exemplify a situation or fact” (1984, p. 27). According to him *darpaṇa-nagara-nyāya*,¹⁴ *darpaṇa-tala-nyāya*, *darpaṇa-mukha*¹⁵ or *atiśud-dha-sphaṭika-darpaṇa-nyāya* (used by Bhāskara), as well as *yogicchā-nyāya* and *sphaṭikādi-jaḍa-nyāya*, belong to the former category. We also observe Abhinavagupta making a clear distinction between *pratibimba-tva*, *pratibimba-vāda* and *pratibimba-nyāya*.¹⁶ What I suggest is that Abhinava has used the idea of reflection both as a theoretical/methodological framework (*vāda*)¹⁷ and as a maxim (*nyāya*) (whether basic or ordinary). Here, of course, one also runs into the methodological problem of analysing the importance of metaphor as a hermeneutic tool. This is something, one must point out, that has not been seriously studied in the context of classical Indian philosophical sources. What role do metaphors play in the development of classical Indian metaphysics? Whether a metaphor can be a model or not is a problematic issue that I purposely intend to avoid here. However, it must be noted that metaphors do not only have illustrative roles, but in many cases themselves form part of the basis of an entire doctrine.¹⁸

¹¹ As pointed out by Lawrence (2005).

¹² *lokaśāstraprasiddhadṛṣṭāntaḥ* | (Sarvalakṣaṇasaṃgraha, p. 73). *pramāṇer arthaparīkṣaṇam* | *samastapramāṇavyāpārād arthādhigatir nyāyaḥ* (*Nyāyavārttika*, 1, p. 14) quoted in the *Nyāyakośa*. *nīyate prāpyate vivakṣitārthasiddhir anena iti nyāyaḥ* (*Nyāyakośa*, p. 446).

¹³ TĀV 3.23: *yad viśvam idaṃ saṃvidi darpaṇapratibimbanyāyena avasthitaṃ na tu tadatiriktatayā bahūropatvena vastusad iti na tatrābhinivēṣṭavyam iti* ||.

¹⁴ ĪPV (KSTS) vol. 1, p. 244; PSV, p. 38; TĀV 3.1; TĀV 3.270; NTU 16.56; SvTU 4.97ab; SvT 5.88 (vol. 3, p. 96); SvT 11.3; SvT 11.57; SvT 11.318cd; VMV 4.11; SN 1.1-2; VBV p. 47.

¹⁵ ĪPVV, vol. 1, p. 161; TĀV 1.176-177; TĀV 3.11.

¹⁶ ĪPVV, vol. 3, p. 238: *ata eva pratibimbatveneti na uktam api tu pratibimbanyāyena iti* | ĪPVV vol. 3, pp. 237–238; ĪPVV, vol. 1, p. 9 (here the reference is being made to Vedānta), ĪPVV, vol. 1, p. 158; PSV p. 99; PTV p. 146; TĀV 3.23-24; ĪPVB (*Bhāskarī*, vol. 1, p. 44). Here Bhāskara glosses *bimbapratibimbavat* with *bimbapratibimbanyāyena*.

¹⁷ See *Nyāyakośa* p. 734 for the definitions of *vāda*.

¹⁸ See Raman (2004, pp. 128–149) for an elaborate discussion on this problem.

It is also important to keep in mind in what context Abhinavagupta uses reflection as a methodological framework. Theories such as reflection, I argue, serve as a part of the critical philosophical structure which Abhinavagupta uses for explaining scriptural claims, and for developing philosophical arguments in debates with real or imagined opponents. By doing so he lays a solid foundation for explaining the Supreme Means (*śāmbhavopāya*) as far as the theory of reflection is concerned. It is possible to clarify why Abhinava discusses the theory of reflection (*pratibimbavāda*) in the first sixty-five verses of the third chapter of the TĀ immediately preceding an exposition of the theory of phonemic emanation (*parāmarśodayakrama*). In the phonemic mysticism of Abhinavagupta the first vowel of the Sanskrit alphabetic system, *A*, represents the Anuttara, the Unsurpassable Being that is nothing but Śiva. When this *A* desires to procreate, he extends, as if, his own reflective nature¹⁹ into himself because of his absolute autonomous agency. In the phonemic realm, Anuttara is nothing other than its own extension represented by the long vowel form of itself, viz. *Ā*. The theory of phonemic emanation presents the three major Trika goddesses Parā, Parāparā and Aparā as the three short vowels of the Sanskrit alphabetic system, *A*, *I* and *U*, respectively.²⁰ However, the potential (*śakti*) of the potent (*śaktimat*), who are inseparable from one another, is what Abhinavagupta calls the supreme Power of Universality (*kaulikī śaktiḥ*) and creativity (*pratibhā*).²¹ Abhinavagupta himself explains this phenomena thus in the TĀ²²:

So this universe is a reflection in the Lord, in the perfectly reflective void of Bhairava's consciousness, [and arises] under the influence of nothing outside [that consciousness]. This ability of the Lord to embody himself as the universe without drawing on anything outside [his own nature] is the supreme goddess that [our masters] call 'creativity' (*pratibhām*), 'the feminine ultimate' (*anuttarām*). It is the supreme Power of Universality (*kaulikī śaktiḥ*), the ability of this (*asya*) deity (*devasya*) [Bhairava] {embodied in the sound *a* (*akulasya*)} to manifest the universe (*kulaprathanaśālinī*) [though] {transcending it (*akulasya*)}, the power with which the Lord is ever one (*aviyukto yayā prabhuḥ*). The Power of Bliss (*ānandaśaktiḥ*) [=ā] is the combination (*yāmalaṃ rūpam*) of these two, the 'passionate embrace' (*saṃghaṭṭaḥ*) out of which the universe is emitted [into consciousness]. This is the [ultimate] reality beyond both the universe-transcending and the universal (*parāparāt param tattvam*). It is 'the Goddess' (*devī*) 'the Essence' (*śāram*) and 'the Heart.' It is the highest (*paraḥ*), omnipotent (*prabhuḥ*) state of absolute potential (*visargaḥ*).

It is also important to mention here that the *śāmbhavopāya*, which Abhinavagupta equates with the reflective state of the mind of an advanced Yogī, is a state of non-

¹⁹ TĀ 3.89: *tatas tadāntaram jñeyam bhinnakalpatvam icchati | viśvabījādantaḥ sarvaṃ bāhyaṃ bimbaṃ vivartsyati ||*.

²⁰ TĀ 3.192. Also see Rastogi (1987, p. 201). For more details see also Pandey (1963, pp. 652–667).

²¹ I have used Sanderson's translations of the terms *kaulikī śakti* and *pratibhā*.

²² I have used Sanderson's translation of the TĀ 3.65–69. See Sanderson (2005, p. 98).

conceptual (*nirvikalpaka*) immersion (*samāveśa*) or ideation (*parāmarśa*)²³ where he seeks to unify the plurality of the fifty Sanskrit phonemes by visualizing them within himself as the singular supreme phoneme. That is to say a Śāmbhava Yogī, as affirmed by Abhinavagupta, should be able to visualize, in terms parallel to the phonemic realities, the outer most ontic-reality (*tattva*) Earth (*pṛthivī*) in an inward (*ahantā*) sequence inside his own non-conceptual (*nirvikalpaka*) state of mind, whereafter he attains oneness with the absolute consciousness of Bhairava.²⁴ Practicing in such a way gradually leads a Śāmbhava Yogī to the state of identity with Bhairava. This is called *jīvanmukti*, liberated while living, which is nothing but the state of unity with Bhairava, where eventually he sees the ultimate reality (*parama-śiva*) enveloping all the ontic-realities in totality (*pūrṇatā*).²⁵ This only happens when he attains complete identification with his own real nature (*pūrṇāhantāparāmarśa*). No physical ritual is involved at all in this process.²⁶ This, Jayaratha points out, happens only by the intense grace (*tīvraśaktipāta*) of the Lord.²⁷ Following the *mātrkākrma* teaching as taught in the source text of the TĀ, the *Mālinīvijayottaratantra* (MVUT), a Śāmbhava Yogī is able to visualise and make manifest within himself the reflected forms of the thirty-six *tattvas*. These realities are then seen and realized by a Yogī as nothing but the reflected realities manifesting within his own self. Thus the state of Śiva (*Śāmbhavāvasthā*) is defined as the state of reflection or pure reflective awareness.

Defining Pratibimba

Abhinavagupta clearly defines *bimba* ('image') only in the TĀ and TS. In the TĀ he states that a *bimba* is something 'which is not mingled with other things, is independent, is real, and manifests, like a face.'²⁸ Jayaratha's commentary on this verse tells us that 'not mingled with others' (*anyāmiśram*) should be understood as 'devoid of homogenous and heterogenous things' (*sajātīyavijātīyatyāvṛttam*).²⁹ And

²³ TĀ 3.274: *nirvikalpe parāmarśe śāmbhavopāyanāmani | pañcāśadbhedatām pūrvasūtritām yojayed budhaḥ ||*.

²⁴ TĀ 3.275-276: *dharām evāvikalpena svātmani pratibimbītām | paśyan bhairavatām yāti jalādiśv apy ayaṃ vidhiḥ || yāvad ante paraṃ tattvaṃ samastāvaraṇordhvagam | vyāpi svatantram sarvajñaṃ yac chivaṃ parikalpitaṃ ||*.

²⁵ TĀ 3.271: *bhūyobhūyaḥ samāveśaṃ nirvikalpam imaṃ śṛitaḥ | abhyeti bhairavībhāvaṃ jīvanmuktya-parābhidham |*.

²⁶ TĀ 3.270: *pūrṇāhantāparāmarśo yo 'syāyaṃ pravivecitah | mantramudrākriyopāśās tadanyā nātra kās cana ||*.

²⁷ TĀV 3.268-270: *yasya tīvraśaktipātavataḥ sādhakāder viśvaḥ pramātrprameyātmā tadbhedopabhedādīnā prapañcavān apy ayaṃ bhāvavargaḥ saṃvidātmani pratibimbatayā bhāti darpaṇanagaranyāyenātirikṛtāyāmānatve'pi anātirikṛtatvena svātmamātrārūpatayaivāvabhāśate, sa khalu viśveśvaraḥ paraprakāśātmabhagavadaikātmīyena prakāśate ity arthaḥ |*.

²⁸ TĀ 3.53: *naivaṃ tallakṣaṇābhāvād bimbaṃ kila kim ucyate | anyāmiśram svatantram sad bhāsamānaṃ mukhaṃ yathā ||*.

²⁹ TĀV 3.53: *anyāmiśram iti sajātīyavijātīyavyāvṛttam ity arthaḥ |*.

this ‘homogeneity’ is defined as an important characteristic of ‘purity’ or ‘untaintedness’,³⁰ which would mean that a *bimba* is not understood to be pure at all. In fact purity, according to Abhinavagupta, lies in the *pratibimba* (‘reflection’) rather than *bimba*, just as purity lies in a mirror and not in a face. Also, a *bimba* is defined as independent and real; just as a face reflected in a mirror cannot ‘be’ a mirror, in the same way a *bimba* cannot manifest ‘as’ *pratibimba*. A thing lies only in its own nature. It cannot lie in the nature of another, as blueness can lie only in blue, and not in the reflection of blue nor in yellow. In other words, blueness manifests as blueness and the reflection of blueness manifests as the reflection of blueness in a mirror.

As for *pratibimba*, Abhinavagupta defines this as a distinct object which is very different from its original image:

Objection: Thus, what is said to be the definition of reflection? [Reply:] By union with the mingling with another [thing], its manifestation is impossible without that [thing]: [that is] the reflected image according to the masters, like a face in the mirror.³¹

Our worldly experience says that until we put our face in front of a mirror, our face cannot be reflected within it. As far as mundane reality is concerned the principle of simultaneity is important; without it reflection cannot take place. We cannot expect to see our face in a mirror that is not in front of us. Nor can I expect to see my face in a mirror at this very moment if the mirror had been in front of me yesterday. In other words, the reflected image has to be independent from the locus, albeit at the same time it has to appear in union with it. From this point of view, only a mirror (or similar reflective surface) is the right locus of reflection, and not the light, eyes and consciousness, which are simply means for this.³² At issue is the specific ontological status of the reflected image, on one hand, and of its locus, on the other.

Contrary to the common-sense understanding of reflection, Abhinavagupta posits that a reflected image can exist on its own even in the complete absence of a prototype. A critical point for interpreting Abhinavagupta’s theory of reflection is the distinction he makes between reflection as it pertains to physical mirrors and reflection in the mirror of consciousness; the former is merely an imperfect analogy for the latter. When analyzing the attributes of reflection taking place in a mirror, Abhinavagupta says that what applies in the case of a mirror does *not* apply in the

³⁰ While I have chosen to translate *nairmalya* either as ‘purity’ or ‘untaintedness’, Gnoli (1999, pp. 51–52) has translated it as ‘senza macchia’ (without stain) and Silburn and Padoux (2000, p. 141) have translated it as ‘parfaite pureté’ (perfect purity). Miśra (2000), who in general only paraphrases the text without providing literal translation, uses ‘svaccha’ (pp. 323, 325–326) for *nirmala* and ‘nairmalya’ for *nairmalya* (p. 327), while Chaturvedi (2002) has used ‘nirmala’ (pp. 286, 288), ‘nirmalatā’ (p. 289) and ‘nairmalya’ (pp. 290–291). For obvious reasons note the Sanskrit loan words in Hindi translations. Ratié (2017, p. 214) translates *nairmalya* or *svacchatā* as ‘limpidity’. See Ratié (2017, fns 62 and 78).

³¹ TĀ 3.56: *nanv ithaṃ pratibimbasya lakṣaṇaṃ kiṃ tad ucyate | anyavyāmiśraṇāyogāt tad bhedāśakyabhāsanam | pratibimbam iti prāhur darpaṇe vadanam yathā ||*.

³² TĀ 3. 19–20: *tasmāt tu naiṣa bhedenā yad bhāti tata ucyate | ādhāras tatra tūpāyā dīpadṛkṣaṃvidāḥ kramāt || dīpacakṣurvibodhānām kāṭhinyābhāvataḥ param | sarvataḥ cāpi nairmalyān na vibhādarśavat prthak ||*.

case of consciousness, simply because a mirror is endowed with innumerable limitations.³³ But consciousness has no limitations of any sort whatsoever:

Here, within one's own self, this entire universe manifests like a variegated image inside a mirror. Consciousness, however, becomes aware of the universe by the activity of its own nature of awareness. But this does not happen at all in case of a mirror.³⁴

Abhinava says that the image that is reflected in consciousness indeed does not possess a separate existence as if it were an independent reality, separate from the mirror of consciousness. There is no existence separate from or outside of consciousness. This is precisely why the reflected image in consciousness does not have form and other attributes. As Abhinava proclaims:

[The image reflected in consciousness has] no space, no form, no union with time, no measure, no mutual conjunction, no negation of this [conjunction], no density, [it has] no state of being non-entity, no innate essence, whatever it is. The teaching of the mirror pointed out [that thinking] in such a way (*iti*) the delusion should surely disappear.³⁵

Jayaratha maintains that Abhinavagupta's purpose in advancing the 'teaching of the mirror' (i.e. the mirror of consciousness) is that it should aid the person suffering from *mala* (impurity—for nondualists, the contraction of consciousness) to rid himself of it and help him in realizing his true self. Since limited or incomplete knowledge is based on duality, it is only the total or complete manifestation of knowledge that can make limited beings discern the true nature of knowledge. Here it should be kept in mind that Abhinava emphasizes the idea of 'the totality of manifesting' (*pūrṇābhāsa*). Knowing a thing in its totality or in its completeness, without delving into the binaries of what may or may not exist, is what is referred to as complete knowledge, which has 'manifesting' alone as its very nature.

According to a Śaiva what is reflected in a mirror is a configuration of form and not an illusion or an error at all. Even though there is the absence of touch, etc., in this form, still the other subtle elements (*tanmātras*) are present there in a state of latency. If it were not the case it would be impossible to distinguish between a *bimba* and its *pratibimba*. For Abhinavagupta, *pratibimba* is,

³³ Also pointed out by Ratié (2017, pp. 211–212).

³⁴ TS p. 19. Also quoted in TĀV 3.65 and ĪPVV Vol. 2, p. 203: *antar vibhātī sakalaṃ jagadātmanīha yadvad vicitraracanā makurāntarāle | bodhaḥ punar nijavimarśanasāravṛtyā viśvaṃ parāmrśati no makuras tathā tu ||* This verse is also quoted in PSV 13, p. 39 and Yogarāja wrongly attributes this verse to the ĪPVV. While in the ĪPVV Abhinavagupta himself says that he has said this (*tathā cokaṭaṃ mayā śrītantrasārādau*) in the TS and elsewhere. This would mean this verse originally belonged to the TS and is simply quoted in the ĪPVV.

³⁵ TĀ 3.23: *na deśo na rūpaṃ na ca samayayogo na parimā | na cānyānyāsaṅgo na ca tadapahānir na ghanatā || na cāvastutvaṃ syān na ca kim api sāraṃ nijam iti | dhruvaṃ mohaḥ śāmyed iti niradiśad darpaṇavidhiḥ ||*.

that reality which is the simple configuration of form, which is united with touch, smell, taste etc. in a state of latency.³⁶

The unique property of a mirror is that it can conceive a ‘form’ within its surface owing to its purity. In other words we can also say that a mirror has a unique quality of manifesting within itself anything that is reflected in it. The unique quality is that a mirror is able to singularly and simultaneously manifest all the diverse entities in itself without causing any change to what is being reflected within it. Abhinavagupta’s purpose is to prove that even if worldly entities are diverse, their cognition is singular. He thus emphasizes the singular manifestation of diverse entities (many different objects) in a mirror. Objects occupying different spaces in the single limited surface of the mirror is logical, according to Abhinava, since those objects are condensed together through reciprocal mixing (*paraspara-sammelana*), for it is otherwise illogical that they could share the same space. If that were not the case, a town could never be reflected in a mirror. All things manifest in a mirror are mutually independent. And because what is reflected cannot be not-reflected, the reflection cannot be said to be a non-entity. While a reflected image is a kind of entity, at the same time it does not possess its own real, independent form.

As Ratié³⁷ explains, a mirror has the unique quality that it is able to reflect within its own surface multiplicity while itself being completely unitary in nature. It has the power of letting objects of cognition manifest within while itself remaining completely unaltered. Coming back to the definition of *pratibimba* quoted above, Abhinavagupta teaches that a mirror can only reflect a ‘form’ but not other sensory perceptions like touch and taste. In the same way it is only the ear which can reflect within itself sound and not touch, form etc. In contrast, consciousness alone is capable of reflecting everything within its own ‘surface’ because it is not pure only with respect to certain qualities, but it is completely pure in every sense. In consciousness, all aspects reflect in their totality simultaneously.

Abhinava tells us that what might be understood as the original image, that which is the cause of a reflected image from the mundane point of view, itself becomes a reflected image in consciousness.³⁸ This universe cannot be called, he says, an original image in consciousness because it lacks the characteristics of an original image. Abhinava himself raises an objection: how could a reflected image exist in the absence of an original image? To this he first replies with almost taunting clumsiness, saying, “As a matter of fact it appears like that, what can we do?”³⁹ But

³⁶ TĀ 3.16: *rūpasamsthānamātram tat sparśagandharasādibhiḥ | nyagbhūtair eva tad yuktaṁ vastu tat pratibimbitam ||*.

³⁷ Ratié (2011a, p. 286).

³⁸ TĀ 3.50: *yad vāpi kāraṇaṁ kiñcid bimbatvenābhiśicyate | tad api pratibimbatvam eti bodhe’ nyathā tv asat ||*.

³⁹ TĀ 3.52: *nanu bimbasya virahe pratibimbaṁ katham bhavet | kiṁ kurmo drśyate tad dhi nanu tad bimbaṁ ucyatām ||*.

later, in TĀ 3.59 cd, he revisits this point and says:

What from that? [We do not care about this] for the original image is not identical with the reflected image. And therefore, in the absence of this [original image], nothing goes wrong as regards the said definition of the [reflected image]. This question is merely confined to the cause.⁴⁰

The main point Abhinava makes here to counter his opponents is that the reflected image is not identical with the original image. That is to say, he would continue to argue, if a face is reflected on the surface of a bright sword, for instance, it can look elliptical or oval, etc., taking the shape of the surface of the sword—thus no longer remaining identical with the original image.⁴¹ Our face may attain many different shapes when it is reflected in a crystal, depending on its shape, size and colour. Jayaratha explains this using the example of a Śiṃśipā tree. The Śiṃśipā maxim is used widely in Sanskrit literature to signify that a thing cannot exist without its essential nature, i.e. a rose cannot exist without its being a flower. Abhinavagupta suggests that this relationship of identity does not exist in the case of an original image and a reflected image. The reflected image has nothing to do with the acquisition of the nature of its original image. In this case, the question arises, what is the difference between the original and the reflected image, and what is the relationship between them? Abhinavagupta defines a reflected image as dependent and the original image as being independent and not mingled with others. Jayaratha explains Abhinava thus:

Here, indeed, all the debaters agree that the reflected image is just a ‘mingling’, i.e. [a kind of] identity, ‘with another thing’, which is its substratum, such as a mirror.⁴² ‘By union with’ this mingling means by its not being separated from it [namely, from the substratum]. Its manifestation is impossible ‘without’ this (*tataḥ*), that is to say alone, independently from another thing, such as a mirror, which is capable of assuming its form. The meaning is that this [reflected image] is dependent [on its substratum]. And with this [definition] it has been pointed out the difference with respect to the original image. For the latter has been defined as not mingled with others and independent. And this has been said previously many a times. Thus it is not repeated here.⁴³

⁴⁰ TĀ 3.59 cd-60: *kiṃ tataḥ pratibimbe hi bimbaṃ tādātmyavṛtti na || ataś ca lakṣaṇasyāśya proktasya tadasaṃbhave | na hānir hetumātre tu praśno yaṃ paryavasyati ||*.

⁴¹ TĀ 3.54: *svarūpānapahānena pararūpasaḍṛkṣatām | pratibimbātmatām āhuḥ khaḍgādarśatalādivat ||*.

⁴² Note the use of Jayaratha here: how he splits the compound *anyena vyāmiśraṇayā yogāt*. Also, see the TS p. 10: *anyavyāmiśratvenaiva bhāti tat pratibimbam*.

⁴³ TĀV 3.56: *iha khalu sarva eva vādināḥ tat pratibimbam āhur yad anyena svādhikaraṇabhūtena darpaṇādīnā yā vyāmiśraṇā tādātmyaṃ, tayā yogāt tadanatiriktatvād hetoḥ | tato' nyasmāt tadākāragrahaṇasahiṣṇor darpaṇāder bhedenā prthaksvātantryeṇāśakyam bhāsanam yasya tat | tatparatantram ity arthaḥ | anena cāśya bimbavaiparītyaṃ darśitam | tad hy anyāmiśraṇ svatantram cety uktam | etac ca pūrvam eva bahūktam itīha na punar āyastam |*.

And since this universe is ‘mingled’ (*miśram*) with consciousness its manifestation without consciousness is impossible. It is absolutely true, Abhinavagupta concludes, that this universe, in which there are *tattvas*, worlds, etc., is a reflected image in consciousness.⁴⁴ But if the relationship between an original image and the reflected image is not that of identity, then what is their relationship? Jayaratha contributes to this debate saying that the original image is not the material cause of the reflected image, for that material cause continues to exist under the aspect of its effect once its own nature has been transformed, like the clay into a pot. This is not the case with the original image here, since even when the reflected image comes into being, its untransformed form itself is perceived separately. Therefore, as Jayaratha puts it, the original image is the instrumental cause, like a potter’s stick in the case of a pot.⁴⁵ *tenātra daṇḍa iva ghaṭe nimittakāraṇaṃ bimbaṃ* |. This means that a reflected image can exist without an original image since there is also another cause which is capable of producing this reflected image, which is ancillary to it.⁴⁶ Abhinava alludes to the metaphor of the ‘universal sovereignty of consciousness’⁴⁷ for emphasizing the power of consciousness that prevails universally.⁴⁸ This also supports his ‘theory of manifestation’ (*ābhāsavāda*) since it is *consciousness* alone that *manifests* everywhere in everything whatsoever.

Here Abhinava introduces an important point about the similarity of form (*sādṛśya*) or identity (*tādātmya*). A mirror is not able to reflect anything more than the similarity of form of an object reflected in it. This pertains to the identity between what shines forth and the Lord’s consciousness.⁴⁹ Even if a mirror with specific qualities (i.e., its being thin, circular etc.) does not abandon those qualities when something is reflected in it, the principle of reflection is nonetheless based on the similarity of form. This is further illustrated by Jayaratha with a couple of examples: when a town is reflected in a mirror, it should also become manifold since there is the perception of many things—as for instance, in the case of a butterfly, where there are different understandings of the variegated cognition of ‘butterfly’ with no loss of unity of cognition. For this reason cognition is unitary and not manifold in as much as it is simply similar to the many aspects of the butterfly. In the same way, a mirror also has a singular nature even when united with manifold reflected images. There is no undesired consequence of this manifoldness, but

⁴⁴ TĀ 3.57: *bodhamiśram idaṃ bodhād bhedanāśakyabhāsanam* | **puratattvādi* [em.; *paratattvādi* KSTS] *bodhe kiṃ pratibimbaṃ na bhānyate* ||.

⁴⁵ TĀV 3.60: *hetuś ca dvividhaḥ—upādānaṃ nimittaṃ ca* | *upādānaṃ yathā ghaṭādaṃ mṛdādi* | *nimittaṃ yathā tatraiva daṇḍādi* | *pratibimbasya ca bimbaṃ nopādānakāraṇaṃ* | *tad dhi ghaṭa iva mṛtsvarūpavikāram āśādy kāryānugāmitvena vartate* | *naivam atra bimbaṃ* | *pratibimbodaye*’ *pi tasyāviktasyaiva prthagupalambhāt* |.

⁴⁶ TĀV 3.61: *tena bimbaṃ vināpi pratibimbaṃ bhavet* | *tadutpādanasamarthasya tatpratīnidhibhūtasya kāraṇāntarasyaṃpi bhāvāt* |.

⁴⁷ Such expressions as *akhaṇḍasaṃvitsāmrāḥya* and *saṃvitsāmrāḥya* are also used by Varadarāja in his *Śivasūtravārttika* 1.11.60 (p. 7) and 3.45.112a (p. 45).

⁴⁸ TĀ 3.51 cd: *sāmrāḥyam eva viśvatra pratibimbasya jṛmbhate* ||.

⁴⁹ See Ratić (2011b, note 14) who also quotes ĪPVV, vol II, p. 89 to illustrate this point.

simply mere similarity to the original image. Therefore, the fact of possessing a reflected image is simply the fact of having a similar form as the original image.⁵⁰

Metaphysics of Light and the Motif of ‘Pure Mirror’

According to Abhinava, the ‘means’ (*upāya*) and the ‘goal’ (*upeya*) are two distinct ways of representing the same reality from the absolute point of view. There is no distinction between the two of them. This is explained in Abhinava’s Śaiva metaphysics using the binary of light (*prakāśa*) and reflective awareness (*vimarśa*). On the other hand from the theological point of view, it also translates into reintegrating Śiva and Śakti. Śakti or reflective awareness functions as the only means to reach Śiva.⁵¹ In other words, integration of the means (*upāya*) and goal (*upeya*) is like the process of reflection (*pratibimba*) which takes place when Śiva is able to cognize his real nature in the ‘reflective medium’ of Śakti, which is integral to his own being. Just as the ‘luminosity’ of light is not different from the light itself, in the same way *vimarśa* is nothing but the very nature of *prakāśa*. The totality of light which pervades or envelops everything is beyond the binary of light and reflective awareness. Thus even though Abhinavagupta some times refers to *prakāśa* alone, but he actually referring to both *prakāśa* and *vimarśa* (*prakāśavimarśamaya*). The plurality of manifestation is inherently present in the unity of consciousness according to Abhinavagupta as, for instance, the variegatedness of a peacock’s plumage already resides in the plasma of the egg of a peacock, where it lies in an unmanifested form⁵²; or, to take another example, a large banyan tree is potentially hidden in its seed before it actually manifests in its variegatedness.⁵³

In the TĀ Abhinavagupta has a specific purpose in mind while developing the fundamental ideas of *prakāśa* in chapter two and *vimarśa* in chapter three. In fact the second chapter, engaging with the idea of *prakāśa*, is entitled *anupāya*, while the third chapter, describing the nature of *vimarśa*, is named *śāṃbhavopāya*. One of the unique features of Abhinavagupta’s Trika is the addition of *anupāya* (‘[means] without a means’) to the scheme of the three immersions (*samāveśa*) or *upāyas* taught in the MVUT. Even though *anupāya* is understood to be the fourth means, it is basically the culmination of the *śāṃbhavopāya*. The *anupāya* is treated independently only to signify the intention of reintegrating both components involved in this process—the means and the goal. Thus it is only by following the *śāṃbhavopāya* that one reaches *anupāya*.

These concepts of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa* also find echo in Abhinavagupta’s use of paired terms such as *anuttara* and *anuttarā*, *akula* and *kaulikī śakti*, or *vācya* and

⁵⁰ TĀV 3.54: *evam darpaṇāder apy anekapratibimbayoge nānekarūpatvam iti nānaikyaprasaṅgo’ pi tu tatsādrśyamātram eva | na ca sādṛśyamātrād eva tādrūpyam | na hi gavayasādrśyād eva gaur gavayaḥ | tasmād bimbasaḍṛśākāratvam eva pratibimbadhāritvam iti tātparyārthaḥ |*

⁵¹ VB 20d: *śaivī mukham ihocyate |*

⁵² Here I am referring to another often used metaphor by Śaiva authors: *mayūrāṇḍarasa-nyāya*.

⁵³ See PTV verse 24 (p. 258): *yathā nyagrodhabījasthaḥ śaktirūpo mahādrumaḥ | tathā hṛdayabījasthaḥ jagad etac carācaram ||*

vācaka, in his Kaula interpretations, and *jñāna* (cognition) and *kriyā* (action), in his Pratyabhijñā system.⁵⁴ It is the realization of the inseparable nature of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*, Śiva and Śakti, or *upeya* and *upāya* which leads one to emancipation. As pointed out by Rastogi this state is referred to as ‘ever-awakened’ (*nityoditā*).⁵⁵ An adept practitioner’s self-reflexive awareness, when s/he is in its highest stage, reflects on the pure surface (*bhitti*)⁵⁶ of his/her own consciousness, leading to awakening. This is the nature of *śāmbhavopāya*, and this awareness arises through the power of Will (*icchā-śakti*), which is why this *upāya* is also called *icchopāya*.

The first level of reflection occurs where *prakāśa* (light) is reflected in *vimarśa* (reflected awareness) like face in a mirror, while the second level of reflection occurs where *vimarśa*, which is nothing but the extended form of *prakāśa* itself, is reflected back in *prakāśa*. This does not happen in the case of a mirror, however, because a face is indifferent towards receiving reflection owing to its impure nature. In both cases reflection takes place within *prakāśa* itself. The kind of reflection with which we are concerned is self-generative, and may not necessarily require a *bimba* or a prototype. It is a matter of the self-luminosity of light, which does not require an external *bimba* or prototype, to shine forth or reflect. Abhinavagupta’s concept of reflection is what we might thus call ‘meta-reflection,’ for understanding which the concepts of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa* are absolutely fundamental.

Before we consider other ways in which Abhinavagupta explains *prakāśa*, a small note on *vimarśa* or *svātantrya* is necessary. Jayaratha defines *svātantrya* or autonomy as ‘the state of being the agent of the act of illumination’.⁵⁷ Here there is an implicit reference to the well-established concept of agent in the Pāṇinian sūtra- “*svatantraḥ kartā*,”⁵⁸ which defines the agent as absolutely autonomous. And we know, again from Sanskrit grammar, that any *kriyā* or action requires a *karṭṛ* or agent. Thus, the act of illuminating or making something appear or manifest requires an autonomous illuminator. This position is likely acceptable to most other systems, but carrying the argument forward, both Abhinavagupta and Jayaratha maintain that ‘being the agent of illumination’ is ‘being the one who manifests everything according to his own Will on His own surface’.⁵⁹ The key question might be why ‘on His own surface’. This is an implicit statement of non-duality: a claim that what shines on one’s own surface is not really distinct from oneself. Here we see the relevance of the mirror-analogy. Kṣemarāja sums up the same ideas in a *sūtra* of his PHr: ‘all becomes manifest by [His] own Will on [His own] surface’.⁶⁰ In other words, the universe shines in identity with the Lord’s consciousness on His own surface.

⁵⁴ IPV 1.8.11: *sa eva hi ahaṃbhāvātmā vimarśo devasya kṛdādīmayasya śuddhe pāramārthikyau jñānakriye, prakāśarūpatā jñānaṃ tatraiva svātantryātmā vimarśaḥ kriyā, vimarśaś ca antaḥkṛtaprakāśaḥ* |.

⁵⁵ See Rastogi (1992, p. 253).

⁵⁶ For more on the concept of *bhitti* see Castro (2013).

⁵⁷ TĀV 3.1: *svatantrateti prakāśanakriyākartṛtvam*.

⁵⁸ *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 1.4.54.

⁵⁹ TĀV 3.1: *tasya ceyattatvaṃ yat svabhittā eva svecchayā sarvaṃ prakāśayaṭī*.

⁶⁰ PHr 2: *svecchayā svabhittau viśvam unmīlayati* ||.

According to the Anuttara Trika of Abhinavagupta the foremost attribute of a reflection is the condition of untaintedness (*nairmalya*). He interprets this idea of untaintedness or purity on multiple levels. Here our focus is how Abhinava understands purity to play a role in the idea of reflection in consciousness. In the realm of common experience, the idea of ‘purity,’ ‘non-contamination,’ or ‘untaintedness’ is surmised when a reflection takes place on the clean surface of a mirror that is free from any kind of contamination. If, for instance, the surface of the mirror is dusty or is not clear because it has been exposed to steam, etc., it would be impossible to see one’s face in a mirror. In the system of Abhinavagupta the idea of purity or *nairmalya* is closely connected with light or *prakāśa*. Rastogi (2002, p. 35) brings our attention to how Abhinava defines *prakāśa* etymologically⁶¹: its root (*prakṛti*) signifies the idea of absolute purity (*nairmalya*) and the affix (*pratyaya*) means autonomy (*svātantrya*) or reflective awareness (*vimarśa*). This means *prakāśa* has two functions: one is to manifest itself (*prakāśate*) because of its absolute purity (*nairmalya*) and the second is to cause others to manifest (*prakāśayati*) along with it (*prakāśa*) owing to the power of absolute autonomy (*svātantrya*). This is also true about our common experience: when light appears it causes everything else manifest with it. To perceive the reflection of a face in a mirror requires the external support of light, however consciousness is like a self-luminous mirror which is not dependent on any external support for its sustenance. In the absence of that self-luminosity of consciousness the universe would be insentient and thus devoid of the light.⁶² But this is not the case. Light is defined by Abhinavagupta as Śiva’s own body that is not only self-dependent, self-sufficient and self-effulgent, but is of the nature of light alone, internally and externally, and nothing else.⁶³ This light is what Abhinava also calls Bhairava Consciousness⁶⁴ or Anuttara, in which there is ‘full freedom’ (*pūrṇasvātantrya*). Other features of this light are that it is of the nature of non-duality, and is beyond the relationship of cause and effect.⁶⁵ That is to say that Abhinavagupta’s idea of light transcends the dichotomy between light and not-light⁶⁶ on the one hand, while on another hand there cannot exist any dichotomy between the light and luminosity. Luminosity is the essential nature of the light; light cannot exist without luminosity, and vice versa. This can also be understood using the example of knowledge and ignorance.⁶⁷ One thing is known and something else is not known. In this process of ‘knowing’ and ‘not-knowing’, the common feature of ‘knowing’ which transcends both these

⁶¹ ĪPVV, Vol II, p. 177: *atra nairmalyāt prakāśanarūpāt prakṛtibhāgaviśrāntād atiriktaḥ karṭṛtālakṣaṇaḥ svātantryasvabhāvo yaḥ pratyayasya arthaḥ* |.

⁶² TĀ 2.10: *saṃvittattvaṃ svaprakāśam ity asmin kiṃ nu yuktibhiḥ | tadabhāve bhaved viśvaṃ jadatvād aprakāśakam* ||.

⁶³ TĀ 2.15: *kiṃ ca yāvad idaṃ bāhyam āntaropāyasammatam | tat prakāśātmatāmātram śivasyaiva nijaṃ vapuḥ* ||.

⁶⁴ TĀ 3.1: *prakāśamātram yat proktaṃ bhairavīyaṃ paraṃ mahaḥ* |.

⁶⁵ For more on the non-dual Śaiva theory of Causality as discussed by Abhinavagupta in the TĀ 9.1-44 see Kaul (forthcoming).

⁶⁶ Here, ‘not-light’ should not be understood as ‘the absence of light’.

⁶⁷ So, for instance, if we compare the idea of ‘not-light’ with ‘ignorance’, the ‘ignorance’ does not mean the ‘absence of knowledge’, but it means ‘limited knowledge’. See ŚSV 1.2.

ideas is called complete knowledge or supreme knowledge. This is because, according to Abhinavagupta, in both the forms of non-duality and duality, where non-duality is represented by knowledge and duality is signified by ignorance, it is basically the Great Lord manifesting Himself in the form of light.⁶⁸ For Abhinavagupta light has a unitary nature, and if it does not have a unitary nature, then it ceases to be light.⁶⁹ Thus when Abhinavagupta refers to light one should understand Supreme Light, which possesses the two indivisible characteristics of light and not-light, but nonetheless remains unitary.⁷⁰ According to him, this universe is manifest because light is manifest and the true essence of all the entities is light alone. Nothing can be manifest if light is not manifest.⁷¹

The concept of *prakāśa* has another property which is the absence of impurity. Light can only manifest when it is free from any kind of impurity. Abhinava says that light is by definition pure in an absolute sense; if there is impurity in it it ceases to be the light. But what is this purity or untaintedness? Abhinavagupta defines purity as 'a single complex of very compact and homogenous elements'⁷² such as one finds in a reflected image in a mirror. The idea explained is that the face is impure and the mirror is pure; an impure object cannot reflect in another impure object. For instance, a face cannot reflect in another face because both of them are bereft of purity, but it can reflect into an object which possesses purity of form, like a mirror. A pure thing, however, can reflect into another pure object as, for instance, a mirror can reflect into another mirror. The idea is that consciousness can manifest or reflect anything in itself since it is completely pure in its totality, while other objects are unable to reflect consciousness in themselves owing to their impurity. Yet the fact that they exist is proof that they are being reflected in cosmic consciousness. A face can reflect in consciousness, but consciousness cannot reflect back into that face. While consciousness is endowed with the quality of absolute autonomy (*svātantrya*), owing to which it can manifest itself into any form or shape it would wish, the mirror is bereft of such a quality. In a mirror, the atoms of form (*rūpaparamāṇavaḥ*) are compact and homogenous. These atoms are associated with atoms existing in the same substratum, and there is no contact with other atoms at all. This is to say that purity of form can only arise when there are only atoms of form in a certain substratum, for instance a mirror. If the atoms of touch also arise along with the atoms of form, in that case purity cannot exist in a mirror, and a reflection cannot occur. In ordinary experience there is no surface capable of reflecting all aspects of a given entity at the same time, except consciousness. There only exist surfaces that are able to reflect a given entity partially, and are therefore pure to a certain extent. For instance a mirror is a pure surface only with respect to

⁶⁸ TĀ 2.18: *idaṃ dvaitam ayaṃ bheda idaṃ advaitam ity api | prakāśavapur evāyaṃ bhāṣate parameśvaraḥ* ||.

⁶⁹ TĀ 2.22: *ata ekaprakāśo' yam iti vāde 'tra sūsthithe | dūrād āvāritāḥ satyaṃ vibhinnaññānavādinaḥ* ||.

⁷⁰ This concept of singular light is repeatedly emphasized both by Abhinavagupta and Jayaratha. See TĀV 2.16-23. The one thing that Abhinava makes clear in TĀ 2.23 is that the 'single' should not be understood in terms of a number or an enumeration.

⁷¹ TĀV 2.30ab: *prakāśa eva sarvabhāvānāṃ parā sattā | TĀV 2.30 cd: na hi tena vinā kiṃcid api idaṃ prakāśate* |.

⁷² TĀ 3.7cd: *nairmalyaṃ cātinivṛṇḍasajātīyakaṣaṃgatīḥ* ||.

form. Consequently, subtle elements (the *tanmātras*) can only be reflected in their purest form on their respective pure substratum. As Abhinava states in the TĀ 3.5 cd, ‘in pure form, only form is manifested’. Abhinava illustrates the idea of purity of form (*rūpa*) through the example of an enamoured woman who, though gazing at her beloved in a mirror, does not feel satisfied at all since a mirror does not have the capacity to reflect the purity of touch:

A secretly enamoured woman, even though touching with her breasts a mirror that is beautiful for the reflected image of the beloved, does not feel satisfied.⁷³

Jayaratha adds that if this principle is not accepted then a mirror could possibly be reflected back in a face. In the common experience it is observed that not everything is reflected in everything else. As far as our own experience of this world is concerned, reflected forms are perceived only in something pure or clear, e.g. a mirror. Jayaratha proposes that this can be understood from both positive and negative concomitance. Thus, contact between a form and its reflected image occurs only when the form (for instance, of a mirror) is perceived as uncontaminated by elements devoid of homogeneity. But this does not transpire when dirt on that form (i.e., mirror) is produced by non-homogenous elements such as steam or dust. With respect to the projector of reflection (*bimba*), what possesses the specific quality called ‘purity’ is indeed the same as that which perceives its reflected image. Jayaratha strengthens this argument in his commentary on the verse TĀ 3.9, where he adds that purity manifests as both primary and secondary. The former belongs to consciousness and the latter is attributed to things such as mirrors. If this is not accepted, then, as mentioned, even the reflected image of our face in a mirror can be reflected back in our face. He says:

This [pureness] in fact is only [perceived] in a specific [reality], corresponds to a specific thing which is pure. If this were not the case, even contact with a mirror should catch the reflected image [in it] on the basis of the principle that everything should appear in everything else. And thus there would be no difference between this [secondary pureness] and the principal [pureness]. [But this would be illogical.] And with respect to this [secondary] pureness, the cause is nothing but His freedom. Thus [Abhinavagupta] says: ‘That which is pure is due to the Will of the [Lord].’ ‘That’ means form etc. [and] therefore contact etc. What is impure regarding this [that is to say form etc. and contact etc.] is self-evident. Therefore, it is only His Power that manifests in such a way. This is the intended meaning.⁷⁴

In a mirror one can only see whatever is reflected within the limited area or surface of the mirror. So for instance, if a mirror is in front of the face one can only see his or her face in the mirror, but cannot see the face of a friend standing some distance

⁷³ TĀ 3.6: *pracchannarāgiṇī kāntapratibimbitasundaram | darpaṇaṃ kucakumbhābhyaṃ spṛśanty api na tṛpyati ||*.

⁷⁴ TĀV 3.7: *tad dhi kvacid eva kiṃcin nirmalam anyathā sarvatra sarvaṃ bhāyād iti darpaṇe' pi sparśaḥ pratibimbaṃ gṛhṇīyāt | evaṃ ca mukhyād asya bhedo na syāt | tannairmalye ca tatsvātantryam eva nimittam ity āha vimalaṃ tat tad icchayeti | tad iti rūpādi | ata eva sparśādi | tatrāvimalam ity arthasiddham | tena tacchaktir eva tathā prarṣteti bhāvaḥ |*.

away. Abhinavagupta says this is because the purity of a mirror is limited by conditions such as the need to stand in front of it, and so on. This quality of reflection is possessed by a few more objects, such as crystals. But the limitation does not apply in the case of consciousness since consciousness is completely pure in every respect. This is indeed why, as already mentioned, Abhinavagupta talks about the manifestation of purity in two ways—as primary purity and as secondary purity:

Primary purity belongs completely to [that] single [principle] which is the Lord-Consciousness. The other [i.e. the secondary purity] is related to a specific [entity] according to its partial aspects.⁷⁵

Abhinava probably intends to use the secondary or limited purity possessed by objects like mirrors as a model to explain the primary or unlimited purity, which belongs to consciousness alone. Only if one understands how reflection operates in the case of a mirror can one understand how the complex mirror-metaphor functions in the case of consciousness.

When speaking of purity Abhinavagupta refers to the same idea explained by Utpaladeva before him:

According to the teaching of the master [Utpaladeva],⁷⁶ pureness is nothing but the capacity of manifesting a different [reality] in identity with one's own self, a capacity possessed by [the mirror, etc.,] which [while acting in such a way] does not lose its own luminosity.⁷⁷

Since consciousness is self-luminous, it does not need any external light to make itself manifest. When it manifests, it manifests along with its light because that is its true nature. It is like a mirror manifesting itself and the form reflected in it simultaneously without losing its quality to reflect, except that the mirror requires external light for this process to take place while consciousness does not. Jayaratha explains further:

[This complex] is 'purity', a compactness of [entities] endowed with smoothness, which derives from [their] being placed in close connection, that is to say by the elimination of unevenness and so on.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ TĀ 3.9: *nairmalyaṃ mukhyaṃ ekasya saṃvinnāthasya sarvataḥ | aṃśāṃśikātaḥ kvāpy anyad vimalaṃ tattadicchayā* || As regards the translation of this verse, it must be pointed out here that it is purity or untaintedness (*nairmalya*) that is indeed fundamental, preeminent or primary (*mukhyaṃ*) and perhaps even omnipresent or complete (on all sides *sarvataḥ*) when it is that of the only Lord, and it is not the case that purity fundamentally and entirely belongs to him.

⁷⁶ For sake of historical clarity, it should be mentioned here that Utpaladeva was not a direct teacher of Abhinavagupta, but was his grand master (*paramaguru*). This is also made clear by Jayaratha in his commentary on TĀV 3.8: '*gurūditam iti*' *guruṇā paramaguruṇā śrīmadutpaladevena*.

⁷⁷ TĀ 3.8: *svasminn abhedād bhinnasya darśanakṣamataiva yā | atyaktasvaprakāśasya nairmalyaṃ tad gurūditam* ||.

⁷⁸ TĀV 3.7: *nairantaryeṇāvasthānāt sthapuṭatvādiparihāreṇa ślakṣaṇatvātma saṃhatatvaṃ nairmalyam* | The word *ślakṣaṇa* also appears in TĀ 27.27, 9.208 (in the commentary in the sense of subtle), 3.54. Here it is used in the sense of 'extremely dense'.

If the surface of a mirror is uneven or rough, one cannot see one's face in it clearly. So smoothness and evenness of the surface in which an image is being reflected are defined as further attributes of purity.

As regards form (*rūpa*), purity is the capacity or the ability of grasping the reflected image which is completely absent in things like a wall etc. Jayaratha remarks that, as regards one entity, for instance a mirror, 'its own luminosity' is not concealed even when another object is reflected in it, since entities like the mirror and so on, manifest in identity with that object, holding the absence of distinction with one's own self. What Abhinava and Jayaratha assert here is that 'apart from the surface of mirror the reflection cannot take place outside its surface even for a single atom'.⁷⁹ And it is this uncontaminated mirror that eventually is compared to the Lord of Consciousness. In other words consciousness is pure like an uncontaminated mirror since the universe, which is intertwined with consciousness, reflects in its entirety only in consciousness,⁸⁰ and as Abhinavagupta suggests, purity belongs completely to the latter alone.

Reflection in Subtle Elements (*tanmātras*)

To explain the theory of reflection further in the TĀ, Abhinavagupta uses the model of the subtle elements (*tanmātras*). The *tanmātras* are pure, and purity (*nairmalya*) is defined by Abhinavagupta⁸¹ as the quality of perceiving the reflected image of everything in the universe, which consists of the five *tanmātras*. And because the *tanmātra* is intermediary between a sense organ (*jñānendriya*) and a gross element (*mahābhūta*), it bears the commonality of both and thus has characteristics of both.⁸² As Torella clarifies,

The relation between the series of subtle elements (*tanmātra*) and that of the gross elements (*bhūta*, *mahābhūta*) is referred to in both the Sāṃkhya and Āgama texts as the relation between universal and particular. The *tanmātra* represents the archetypal, quintessential form of the relative *mahābhūta* of which it constitutes the primary quality (sound-ether, tactile sensation-air, etc.), though not the only one, as all the schools are forced to admit.⁸³

Keeping the above model in mind we understand that the universal form of sound reflects in ether while its particular form reflects in the ear. In the same way the universal form of touch reflects in air and its particular form reflects in skin. The universal form of 'form' (*rūpa*) reflects in fire (and also in a mirror) and the particular form of form reflects in the eye. Likewise the universal form of taste and smell reflect in water (or saliva) and earth, respectively, and the particular forms of

⁷⁹ TĀV 3.8: *na hi darpaṇadeśād aṇumātre' pi bāhye deśe pratibimbaṃ bhavatīti bhāvaḥ |*.

⁸⁰ TĀ 3.4: *nirmale makure yadvad bhānti bhūmijalādayaḥ | amiśrās tadvad ekasmimś cinnāthe viśvavṛttayaḥ ||*.

⁸¹ See the fn. 77 above for the definition of *nairmalya*.

⁸² See Rastogi (2013, p. 202).

⁸³ Torella (2002, p. 195, fn. 19).

both reflect in the tongue and the nose. Here we are concerned with the undifferentiated unity that makes the objects of knowledge cognizable. Rastogi has paraphrased these ideas as found in Utpaladeva's ĪPK:

The cognizable reality consists of twenty[-]three types divided into two classes of means and effect. The means, comprising the external and internal, are thirteen in number and the group of effects is tenfold owing to its division into subtle and gross. The subtle effects stand for what is popularly known as *tanmātras* and the gross for five elements (*pañcamahābhūtas*). Both of them are universals where former is cause-universal as clay (*mṛt*) in jar and may be likened to *para-sāmānya*, the latter is similarity-universal like jariness in a jar and may be likened to *apara-sāmānya*.⁸⁴

This scheme of using *tanmātras* to interpret the theory of reflection is mentioned both in Abhinavagupta's TĀ and PS, but is apparently missing from the ĪPV and ĪPVV. Elsewhere in his works, namely in the PTV, the PS and in the TS, Abhinavagupta makes reference to the *pañcatanmātras*⁸⁵ in order to illustrate the mechanism of reflection. In the TS Abhinavagupta states:

The reflected image is what is incapable of shining independently [and] it manifests only as mingled with another thing, like the form of a face in the mirror, like taste/juice in saliva, like smell in the nose, like touch while in sexual union in the faculty of bliss [=genitals], or like 'touch with trident or spear' in the faculty of the internal touch, or like an echo in ether.⁸⁶

Jayaratha, while commenting on TĀ 3.4, states that 'the universe is nothing but the five [subtle elements] starting with form and so on,' and to support his stance he quotes a verse from the *Svabodhamañjarī* of Vāmanadatta.⁸⁷ Here Jayaratha seems to move away from the main doctrinal position of the Śaivas who believe that this universe constitutes of nothing but thirty-six *tattvas*.⁸⁸ The reason why Abhinavagupta has focused on the five *tanmātras* to explain reflection in the TĀ is probably because for him purity and the *tanmātras* are connected; even if he accepts the

⁸⁴ Rastogi (2013, pp. 200–201).

⁸⁵ For the definition of each *tanmātra* and their functioning see TĀ 9.280–288. For the role of *tanmātras* in the *mātrikākrama* see PTV, p. 4. Also see PS-21, TS-89–90, TĀ-Vol.6, p. 218. The 14 Chapter of the MVUT discusses the visualisation of the *tanmātras* in the yogic states.

⁸⁶ TS 3, pp. 10–11: *yat bhedenā bhāsitam aśaktam anyavyāmiśratvenaiva bhāti tat pratibimbam mukharīpam iva darpaṇe rasa iva dantodake gandha iva ghrāṇa mithunasparśa iva ānandendriye śūlakuntādisparśo vā antaḥsparśanendriye pratiśrutkeva vyomni ||*.

⁸⁷ SBUM 2: *rūpādipaṇcavargo' yaṃ viśvam etāvad eva hi | grhyate pañcabhis tac ca cakṣurādibhir indriyaiḥ ||* This verse is also quoted in TĀV 4.149 as pointed out by Torella (2000, p. 402). However, Torella has missed TĀV 3.4. Jayaratha quotes first two *pādas* of this verse in the TĀV in 4.149 and 4.221 besides TĀV 3.4. Even though Vāmanadatta's teachings, as pointed out by Torella (1994, p. 487) in detail, were held in high esteem not only by the Śaiva non-dualists, but also by dualists like Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha, it might have been more authoritative for Jayaratha to take recourse to an Āgamic source for justifying that the universe is made up of the *pañcatanmātras* and nothing else.

⁸⁸ It is well known that the Trika Śaivism accepts the Sāṃkhya model of the *tattvas*. However, the sequence of the *tattvas* may vary considerably from one Āgamic system to another. And sometimes also the definition of the *tattvas* can vary to some extent. See Goodall (pp. 77–111) in Goodall and Isaacson (2016) and Kaul (2018).

common knowledge that “[...] the (five) gross elements (*bhūtāni*) cannot exist without the five *tanmātras*,”⁸⁹ it is clear to him that when speaking of *bhūtas* or the *tattvas* in general, other qualities are also involved, for instance heaviness, smell and so forth—i.e. the other qualities that should be reflected in turn. However, in the case of each *tanmātra*, it is only possible to have one reflection at a time. They can only reflect the corresponding quality that they are sensitive to. For example, a mirror can only reflect a form; it cannot reflect touch. We never have a surface that is capable of reflecting *all* the aspects *at the same time* of a given entity: we only have surfaces that are able to reflect partially a given entity; therefore they are never completely pure, but pure only to a certain extent. Consequently, only subtle elements can be reflected in their purest form in their respective pure substrata. This is what TĀ 3.5 cd states: ‘in pure form, *only* form is manifested’. This, according to Abhinavagupta, also applies to the other four *tanmātras* (Table 1).

Also, as mentioned above, in the case of five *tanmātras*, this process takes place both inwardly and outwardly. For instance in our daily life what we see is that a form is reflected outwardly as fire while inwardly it is reflected in an eye.⁹⁰ All the *tanmātra* reflections, according to Abhinavagupta, are like reflections in a mirror, but there are limitations attached to each. Even individual reflections cannot take place if there is no consciousness. However, in consciousness *everything* can reflect *simultaneously* because in consciousness, it is *svātantrya* alone that is reflected. In other words *svātantrya* is the *bimba* reflected in the mirror of consciousness. But in consciousness, we can only see a reflected thing and never its prototype.

Out of the five *tanmātras* Abhinava’s emphasis on *rūpa* (form) is justified, for in a reflected image, it is only the manifestation of a configuration of form that appears, and not touch etc. Heaviness is not a characteristic of a reflected image in a mirror. Abhinava regards a mirror simply as a means of perceiving the reflected image.⁹¹ Explaining the purport of Abhinavagupta, Jayaratha brings in a possible objection: if it is said that touch also resides in the reflected image then it would become evident that there is also heaviness in it, but our common experience contradicts this, since when we see the reflected image of a mountain in a mirror, the mirror does not gain weight at all. And the question arises whether form and touch always reside together. If both are present in the original image (*bimba*), then why is only form reflected and not touch? Abhinava states that a mirror simply works as a means for the realisation of form, which manifests bereft of touch and so on. But form can manifest only when it is in its purest state.

Abhinavagupta’s point here is that when a face is reflected in a mirror, the reflected image in the mirror assumes the characteristics of the mirror where the face is being reflected. So, for instance, if the colour of the mirror is blue, our face in the mirror will also appear blue, or depending on the shape and size of the mirror, our face may also take the respective shape in the mirror. Exactly in the same way, because this universe is a reflection in the mirror of consciousness, whatever is

⁸⁹ See Singh (1988, p. 117).

⁹⁰ See Lakshman Joo (1988, p. 29ff).

⁹¹ TĀ 3.18: *ata eva gurutvādīr dharmo naitasya lakṣyate | na hy ādarśe samsthito ’sau taddrṣtau sa upāyakaḥ ||*.

Table 1 *Tanmātras* corresponding to *Mahābhūtas* and *Buddhīndriyas*

<i>Tanmātra</i>	<i>Mahābhūta</i>	<i>buddhīndriya</i>
<i>gandha</i>	<i>prthivī</i>	<i>nāsikā</i>
<i>rasa</i>	<i>ap</i>	<i>jihvā</i>
<i>rūpa</i>	<i>tejas</i>	<i>cakṣus</i>
<i>sparsa</i>	<i>vāyu</i>	<i>tvac</i>
<i>śabda</i>	<i>ākāśa</i>	<i>karṇa</i>

reflected in it takes the form of the collection of qualities of consciousness, which are nothing but light and reflective awareness. As Abhinava says:

And as smell, form, touch, taste and so on, being reflected, appear with the characteristics of their support, like a face in a sword [assumes the characteristics of the latter], in the same way, this universe, being reflected in consciousness, takes refuge in the collection of qualities [of consciousness] beginning with ‘being light’ and ‘being freedom’.⁹²

After having established how the theory of reflection works in the context of form (*rūpa*), Abhinava focuses on explaining how an echo (*pratiśrutkā*) works. He defines ‘echo’ as the reflection of sound. An echo, for him, is not a sound arising from another sound, nor is it a rebounding sound as we commonly think it to be. An echo, Abhinava says, is a reflection of sound.⁹³ Moreover, for Abhinavagupta the echo (like *pratibimba*) itself remains an original sound, because when we make noise, the so called original sound (like *bimba*) comes back to us in the form of an echo (like *pratibimba*), just as in the case of a face in a mirror. In other words echo as echo (like in case of *pratibimba*) is a new sound and not just the bouncing of the so-called original sound (like in case of *bimba*). Echo, like the reflection of a face in a mirror, has a unique ontological status. In an echo we hear a sound that seems as though it is produced by someone else even if it is the echo of our own voice. The echo is our own sound which eventually is recognized by the speaker himself or herself. As in the case of a reflected image, Abhinava advocates the same position for sound using the analogy of a lady, a mirror, and her beloved:

But also without the perception of the main image, the perception of the reflected image is possible. [A lady] can perceive the form of the beloved who stands behind her reflected in front in a mirror.⁹⁴

⁹² TĀ 3.45-46: *yathā ca gandharūpasprgrasādyāḥ pratibimbitāḥ | tadādhāroparāgeṇa bhānti khadḡe mukhādīvat || tathā viśvam idaṃ bodhe pratibimbitam āśrayet | prakāśatvasatantratvaprabhṛtīm dharmavistaram ||*

⁹³ TĀ 3.24-26: *itthaṃ pradarsīte’ mutra pratibimbanavartmani | śabdasya pratibimbaṃ yat pratiśrutketi bhānyate || na cāsau śabdajāḥ śabda āgacchattvena saṃśravāt | tenaiva vaktrā dūrasthaiḥ śabdasyāśravaṇād api || piṭhīrādīpidhānāṃśaviśiṣṭachidrasaṅgatau | citratvāccāsyā śabdasya prati-bimbaṃ mukhādīvat ||*

⁹⁴ TĀ 3.29: *mukhyagrahaṃ tv api vinā pratibimbagraho bhavet | svapaścātsthaṃ priyaṃ paśyeṭ taṃkitam mukure vapuḥ ||*

Abhinavagupta argues that an echo is also heard by means of reflection (*pratisaṃkramaṇa*), and has the nature of an original sound. The sound arises on its own. It should not be understood, as the Vaiśeṣikas do, as coming into being by contact or breaking. In the Vaiśeṣika theory, ether is regarded as the inherent cause of sound. Each sense faculty, according to them, is made out of the substance with which it is particularly associated. Accordingly the faculty of hearing is made up of *ākāśa* (ether).⁹⁵ Here Abhinava critiques the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory and advocates for the unity of the cognition of sound. That is to say that he emphasises the unique quality of ether (*ākāśa*) that is capable of grasping the sound. Ether is the only substratum able to catch sound, just as a mirror is the only substratum able to catch hold of form (*rūpa*). In other words ether is the only substratum which is pure with respect to sound, allowing sound to reflect in ether. Since, according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, an ear (the auditory faculty) is part of the all-pervasive ether (*ākāśa*) and also sensitive with respect to it, the other important point implied here is that, in the presence of sounds of various intensities, an ear is able to hear these simultaneously with the same intensities with which they were produced. This is exactly like in a mirror, which is able to manifest within itself the reflected image of a variegated city exactly as it is.

The point Abhinavagupta makes is that sound (*śabda*) is only reflected in ether and not in anything else. This is exactly *not* the case in the context of consciousness, where reflection takes place without any conditions. In the case of the production of sound, the speaker and the listener have a number of conditions or limitations which determine how and where sound is produced. That is to say sounds depend on the distance between points, and the direction in which one speaks or listens. All this becomes irrelevant in the case of consciousness. The ether is the perceiver of the reflected image of sound⁹⁶ only in as much as it is in front of the original 'image'. This is how Abhinavagupta illustrates the idea:

And it is said that being in front of [the original image] is because of the steadiness [of the reflected image] due to [its] non-difference with such a mirror.⁹⁷ Therefore, the place occupied by the speaker, which is being reflected in the space of a cavity such as a well, appears endowed with sound, as if appearing in a speaker who is different from that.⁹⁸

This is to say that a reflection can only reflect in a mirror when the mirror is exactly in front of the reflected object and not in back of it. This is an important condition for reflection to take place within the surface of a mirror. Jayaratha elaborates further, saying that this is exactly what happens in the case of sound, a reflection in the ether. This is what Jayaratha reiterates:

In as much as the sound is the quality [of ether], since it is connected with its quality-bearer [i.e., with the ether], it is dependent on the latter. Its reflection

⁹⁵ For a detailed discussion on ether (*ākāśa*) in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika see Bhaduri (1975, pp. 163–182).

⁹⁶ In other words it is only in ether that sound is cognised.

⁹⁷ TĀ 3.30: *sāmmukhyaṃ cocyate tādṛgdarpaṇābhedaśaṃsthiteḥ* ||.

⁹⁸ TĀ 3.31: *ataḥ kūpādīpiṭhīrākāśe tat pratibimbītam | vaktrākāśaṃ saśabdaṃ sad bhāti tat paravaktṛvat* ||.

in the quality-bearer is logically tenable only together with the quality-bearer; it has been said: 'In the ether there is ether.'⁹⁹

Jayaratha compares the space of an ear with the space in a well or cave, saying that just as in a mirror, where the reflected image may not necessarily be similar to its original image, the same is the case with sound. Since the sound is reflected in ether, it also takes the shape of the substratum where it is reflected, e.g. if we blow air into an empty jar this sounds different from the original sound. Likewise, when we blow air into a musical instrument like a flute, the reflected form of the original sound is completely different. In the same way people far away from a certain sound may not be able to hear it while others near to the place of origination may be able to hear it clearly and loudly. Since the reflected sound (i.e. the echo) may not necessarily be similar to the so-called original sound, it becomes clear, according to the argument of Abhinavagupta, that the reflected sound (i.e. the echo) is in itself an original sound.

Having explained the application of reflection in the *tanmātras* of form (*rūpa*) and sound (*śabda*), Abhinavagupta continues by saying this is exactly how reflection works in the domains of touch (*sparsa*), taste (*rasa*) and odour (*gandha*) as well. In other words, for Abhinavagupta 'a pleasant contact is reflected in the blissful abode of touch.'¹⁰⁰ It is indeed due to the pureness of contact that, when reflected, touch becomes fit for the enjoyment of making love. For the same reasons, explains Jayaratha, the pleasure of seminal emission of semen depends on sensitive (or pure) touch. A touch could be both pleasant or unpleasant: there is also the reflection of touch in a violent blow of a trident on our skin, because of which we feel agitation in our body.¹⁰¹ Jayaratha says:

'Blissful' is a specific substratum [of the yogic body] such as the bulb, heart, or base of the palate (*tāluta*), which are loci of bliss. There, indeed, due to the pureness of contact, the touch that is fit for the enjoyment of making love is reflected; by means of this [touch] there could be also the pleasure of the emission of semen and so on. For this reason, since it produces abundance of bliss it has been defined as 'pleasant' (*sundara*). Also, the other contact which is unpleasant since it produces pain and so on, necessarily, is reflected in a specific substratum (*ādhāra-viśeṣa*)¹⁰² such as the perineal region (*mattagandha*),¹⁰³ the belly (*jaṭhara*), the bronchial

⁹⁹ TĀV 3.31: *śabdasya guṇatvena guṇini samavetatvāt tatparatantratvam eveti guṇaiva sahāsyā guṇini pratibimbanam yuktam ity uktam ākāṣe ākāśam iti* |.

¹⁰⁰ TĀ 3.36ab: *śabdo nabhasi sānande sparśadhāmani sundaraḥ* |.

¹⁰¹ TĀ 3.36cdef: *sparsō ' nyo ' pi dṛḍhāghātaśūlaśītādikodbhavaḥ || parasthaḥ pratibimbatvāt svadehoddhūlanākaraḥ* ||.

¹⁰² In the NTU 7.5, Kṣemarāja mentions sixteen *ādhāras* and *mattagandha*, *jaṭhara*, *kūrmanāḍī* and *kaṇṭha* fall under this list. He also interprets all the sixteen in the light of Kaula system.

¹⁰³ *mattagandhashthāna* is referred to as perineal region. Cf. NTU 7.36. The contractions and relaxations of the perineal region (*mattagandhasaṅkoca*) that Jayaratha refers to in TĀV 5.55 is supposed to be a painful experience just like as if a serpent is hit by a stick. (See "*prāṇadaṇḍaprayoga*" in TAK III, pp. 330–331).

tube (*kūrmanāḍī*)¹⁰⁴ and the throat (*kaṇṭha*), which are painful and so on, and through which one can even lose consciousness. ‘Which belongs to another person’ means ‘which is perceived by another person’ since, in this case, this [touch] is the main [source of reflection]. This was the meaning. And the implication is as follows: by virtue of this, the [other touch] would be in such a way [namely, would remain the main source of reflection] even though it is [simply] remembered or imagined and so on. And how is it recognized that it is a reflection? In order to answer this question he says: ‘Since [all those are] reflection, they cause excitement in one’s own body.’ And that is the same in the experience of both pain and pleasure. In this regard (*iti*) the non-distinction [between these two] is accepted.¹⁰⁵

Here Abhinavagupta points out the unitary nature of the excitement created because of either pleasant or unpleasant touch. In other words, concerning the nature of the cognition of touch, the distinction between pleasant and unpleasant touch is not relevant at all. It is the manifestation (*ābhāsa*) of all objects of cognition that establishes their existence. This unitary nature (or what is translated by Jaideva Singh as ‘homogeneous’) is called *khecarī-samatā* by Abhinavagupta in the PTV.¹⁰⁶ In the PTV Abhinavagupta says:

That very *khecarī* is perceived separately (from the Divine) in the form of desire, anger, etc. However, the *samatā* or sameness of *khecarī* means the perception of her full divine nature everywhere (in *śabda* or sound, *rūpa* or form and colour, *rasa* or taste, *gandha* or smell, *sparsa* or contact) because of her being of the nature of perfect Bhairava. Even an iota of the ignorance of the nature of the integral *anuttara* amounts to a contrary state of mind. It is this contrary state that constitutes transmigratory existence (*samsāra*).¹⁰⁷

Touch, taste, smell etc. cannot be perceived without the associated sense faculty. These faculties are located in the internal sphere and manifest only through the activity of one’s own senses, which are governed by internal organs. In the experience of touch, even though it (touch) is predominant, because only touch

¹⁰⁴ In the *vyāsabhāṣya* of the YS 3.32 *kūrmanāḍī* is mentioned as a tortoise-shaped tubular structure. If one is able to control the bronchial tube (*kūrmanāḍī*) one can attain calmness. See Aranya (2000, p. 307).

¹⁰⁵ TĀV 3.35-36: *sānanda ity ānandasthānātmake kandaḥṛttālutaḍāḍāv ādhāraviśeṣe | tatraiva hi sparśasya nairmalyān mithunopabhogasamucitāḥ sparśaḥ pratisaṃkrāmati yena dhātuniḥṣyanda-sukhyādy api syāt | ata evānandātiśayakāritvāt sundara ity uktam | anyo duḥkādīkāritvād asundaro ‘pi sparśo ‘rthād duḥkḥādīyātmake mattagandhakāṭharakūrmanāḍīkaṇṭhaprabhṛtāv ādhāraviśeṣe pratisaṃkrāmati yena mūrchādy api syāt | parastha iti parānubhūyamānaḥ | tatra hi sa mukhya iti bhāvaḥ | etac copalakṣaṇam tena smaryamāṇoṭprekṣyamāṇādirūpo ‘py asāv evaṃ syāt | pratibimbatvaṃ cāśya kuto lakṣyata ity āha pratibimbatvāt svadehoddhūlanākara iti | etac ca sukhaduḥkḥayor anubhave samānam ity aviśeṣeṇopāttam |.*

¹⁰⁶ See Singh (1988, pp. 42–44).

¹⁰⁷ Singh (1988, p. 39). I have used Jaideva Singh’s translation.

exists there in its purest form, the other *tanmātras* are not completely absent. They exist in their latent forms, as discussed previously.¹⁰⁸ Adopting the model of the *tanmātras* and explaining the phenomenology of reflection, Abhinava applies the same argument to smell and taste as he does to the cases of form, echo and touch. As he says:

In the same way, [the same occurs for] smell in another nose; [and] the taste becomes manifest in the one which is the [basis of] saliva.¹⁰⁹

And in the same way a form which is reflected in the eyeballs [like in a mirror] is not perceived without another eye [i.e. the eye of another person], in this very way, although they are present, taste, touch, smell and so on are not perceived without [another] sense faculty.¹¹⁰

However, what is important to keep in mind, according to Abhinava, is that in each case ‘manifestation’ (*ābhāsa*) alone is the essence of the nature of reflection. Here Abhinavagupta is suggesting that the ontology of reflection lies in its appearance; and thus, probing further along strictly philosophical lines, he questions whether a reflected image generates its own causal efficacy (*arthakriyā*). This becomes a major point of contention between the non-dual Śaivas and the Naiyāyikas where Abhinavagupta, following his grandmaster Utpaladeva, further elaborates upon the Śaiva theory of causal efficacy appropriating it according to the non-dual doctrinal position of Pratyabhijñā.¹¹¹ I intend to focus on this debate more closely in the context of theory of reflection in a subsequent essay currently under preparation.¹¹² The present essay has only been an effort to understand the basic position of Abhinavagupta vis-à-vis his theory of reflection focusing mainly only on a part of the TĀ.

Conclusion

As mentioned towards the beginning of this paper, two relatively recent attempts at understanding the problem of reflection in Abhinavagupta were made by Lawrence (2005) and Ratié (2017). The former explores the implications of ritual in the context of reflection while the latter focuses on philosophical debates and contexts. In this essay, I have attempted to contribute to the discussion through a close reading of the idea of reflection in the TĀ. I have only evaluated the problem in its hermeneutical context, analysing various layers of reflection’s meaning and interpretation bringing in still neglected questions about *tanmātras*, for instance, or the example of the echo. However, there are further important insights to be studied and developed as far as the fundamental philosophical position of Abhinavagupta

¹⁰⁸ TĀV 3.40.

¹⁰⁹ 3.38ab: *evaṃ ghrāṇāntare gandho raso dantodake sphuṭaḥ ||*.

¹¹⁰ TĀ TĀ 3.39: *yathā ca rūpaṃ pratibimbitaṃ dṛṣor na cakṣuṣānyena vinā hi lakṣyate | tathā rasasparśanasaurabhādikaṃ na lakṣyate’ kṣeṇa vinā sthitaṃ tv api ||* Also cf. ĪPVV vol. 1, ad st. 1.2.8.

¹¹¹ See ĪPV 1.8.6; 2.2.7; 2.3.4-6; 2.3.12; TĀV 3.41-42.

¹¹² For more details see Kaul 2016.

related to the theory of reflection is concerned vis-à-vis his tradition of Anuttara Trika and Kālīkula.¹¹³ Abhinavagupta cannot be understood fully within the confines of the Pratyabhijñā system alone: his logical-epistemological interpretation of reflection is just a single dimension of a larger project. While in the ĪPV and the ĪPVV Abhinavagupta builds upon the Pratyabhijñā-based Trika, in the TĀ he engages in crafting a Trika grounded in the Krama cult of Kālī. In addition to this, in the PTV, he shapes a Trika immersed in Kula system.

Abhinavagupta's commentaries (both the ĪPV and the ĪPVV) on two verses of Utpaladeva, viz. 1.2.8 and 2.4.19,¹¹⁴ are significant sources for critically exploring the polemics of reflection in the non-dual Śaiva philosophy. In the TĀ Abhinavagupta appropriates the idea of reflection to fit within his Śaiva soteriology, while his polemical discussions in the ĪPV and the ĪPVV are deeply embedded in Śaiva theological metaphysics. In his Pratyabhijñā exegesis Abhinava strongly contests the Sāṅkhya idea of reflection. However, while discussing reflection in the TĀ there is no mention of Sāṅkhya at all—at least not in the third chapter.¹¹⁵ Even though Jayaratha bases most of his commentary on the original ideas of Abhinavagupta found in his colossal commentary, the ĪPVV, sometimes verbatim, he nonetheless does not touch upon the Sāṅkhya theory in his commentary on *pratibimbavāda* in the TĀ. As a loyal commentator, he apparently does not wish to put words in the mouth of Abhinavagupta, and thus focuses on Naiyāyikas alone.

In each one of the above mentioned texts Abhinavagupta has approached the problem of reflection differently, keeping in mind various thematic approaches. Abhinavagupta is fond of creating multiple Śaiva hermeneutic layers where engagement with an absolute non-dual subject is implicit. From the epistemological point of view, the limited knowing subject and knowable reality as the object of knowledge are both real at the same time, since they are nothing but the manifestation of the pure knowing subject alone. Together with this argument, Abhinavagupta establishes a non-dual Śaiva ontology. For Abhinavagupta phenomenal reality is as real as the absolute reality, for it is nothing but the manifestation of the luminosity of light, where luminosity or reflective awareness is the manifestation of light's own real nature and nothing else.

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¹¹³ See Sanderson (2007, p. 376).

¹¹⁴ Also quoted by Jayaratha in the TĀV 3.8.

¹¹⁵ In the context of *Śaktipāta* Abhinavagupta does have a detailed discussion on Sāṅkhya in the TĀ 13.3-41b.

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